

From The Contemporary Review,

Vol. 34, 1878-79.

1879  
(39)

36337

Goldwin Smith

## THE GREATNESS OF ENGLAND.\*

**T**WO large islands lie close to that Continent which has hitherto been selected by Nature as the chief seat of civilization. One island is much larger than the other, and the larger island lies between the smaller and the Continent. The larger island is so placed as to receive primæval immigration from three quarters—from France, from the coast of Northern Germany and the Low Countries, and from Scandinavia, the transit being rendered somewhat easier in the last case by the prevailing winds and by the little islands which Scotland throws out, as resting-places and guides for the primæval navigator, into the Northern Sea. The smaller island, on the other hand, can hardly receive immigration except through the larger, though its southern ports look out, somewhat ominously to the eye of history, towards Spain. The western and northern parts of the larger island are mountainous, and it is divided into two very unequal parts by the Cheviot Hills and the mosses of the Border. In the larger island are extensive districts well suited for grain: the climate of most of the smaller island is too wet for grain and good only for pasture. The larger island is full of minerals and coal, of which the smaller island is almost destitute. These are the most salient features of the scene of English history, and, with a temperate climate, the chief physical determinants of English destiny.

What, politically speaking, are the special attributes of an island? In the first place, it is likely to be settled by a bold and enterprising race. Migration by land under the pressure of hunger or of a stronger tribe, or from the mere habit of wandering, calls for no special

\* The writer some time ago gave a lecture before the Royal Institution on "The Influence of Geographical Circumstances on Political Character," using Rome and England as illustrations. It may perhaps be right to say that the present paper, which touches here and there on matters of political opinion, is not identical with the latter portion of that lecture.

effort of courage or intelligence on the part of the nomad. Migration by sea does: to go forth on a strange element at all, courage is required; but we can hardly realize the amount of courage required to go voluntarily out of sight of land. The first attempts at ship-building also imply superior intelligence, or an effort by which the intelligence will be raised. Of the two great races which make up the English nation, the Celtic had only to pass a channel which you can see across, which perhaps in the time of the earliest migration did not exist. But the Teutons, who are the dominant race and have supplied the basis of the English character and institutions, had to pass a wider sea. From Scandinavia especially, England received, under the form of freebooters who afterwards became conquerors and settlers, the very core and sinews of her maritime population, the progenitors of the Blakes and Nelsons. The Northman, like the Phœnician, had a country too narrow for him, and timber for ship-building at hand. But the land of the Phœnician was a lovely land, which bound him to itself; and wherever he roved his heart still turned to the pleasant abodes of Lebanon and the sunlit quays of Tyre. Thus he became a merchant, and the father of all who have made the estranging sea a highway and a bond between nations, more than atoning, by the service thus rendered to humanity, for his craft, his treachery, his cruelty, and his Moloch-worship. The land of the Scandinavian was not a lovely land, though it was a land suited to form strong arms, strong hearts, chaste natures, and, with purity, strength of domestic affection. He was glad to exchange it for a sunnier dwelling-place, and thus, instead of becoming a merchant, he became the founder of Norman dynasties in Italy, France, and England. We are tempted to linger over the story of these primæval mariners, for nothing equals it in romance. In our days science has gone before the most adventurous barque, limiting the possibilities of discovery, disenchanting the enchanted seas, and depriving us for ever of Sindbad and Ulysses. But the Phœnician and the Northman put forth into a really unknown world. The Northman, moreover, was so far as we know the first ocean sailor. If the story of the circumnavigation of Africa by the Phœnicians is true, it was an astonishing enterprise, and almost dwarfs modern voyages of discovery. Still it would be a coasting voyage, and the Phœnician seems generally to have hugged the land. But the Northman put freely out into the wide Atlantic, and even crossed it before Columbus, if we may believe a legend made specially dear to the Americans by the craving of a new country for antiquities. It has been truly said, that the feeling of the Greek, mariner as he was, towards the sea, remained rather one of fear and aversion, intensified perhaps by the treacherous character of the squally Ægean; but the Northman evidently felt perfectly at home on the ocean, and rode joyously, like a seabird, on the vast Atlantic waves.

23VHORA 011804

ADAMAS 70

Not only is a race which comes by sea likely to be peculiarly vigorous, self-reliant, and inclined, when settled, to political liberty, but the very process of maritime migration can scarcely fail to intensify the spirit of freedom and independence. Timon or Genghis Khan, sweeping on from land to land with the vast human herd under his sway, becomes more despotic as the herd grows larger by accretion, and the area of its conquests is increased. But a maritime migration is a number of little joint-stock enterprises implying limited leadership, common counsels, and a good deal of equality among the adventurers. We see in fact that the Saxon immigration resulted in the foundation of a number of small communities which, though they were afterwards fused into seven or eight petty kingdoms and ultimately into one large kingdom, must, while they existed, have fostered habits of local independence and self-government. Maritime migration would also facilitate the transition from the tribe to the nation, because the ships could hardly be manned on purely tribal principles: the early Saxon communities in England appear in fact to have been semi-tribal, the local bond predominating over the tribal, though a name with a tribal termination is retained. Room would scarcely be found in the ships for a full proportion of women; the want would be supplied by taking the women of the conquered country; and thus tribal rules of exclusive intermarriage, and all barriers connected with them, would be broken down.

Another obvious attribute of an island is freedom from invasion. The success of the Saxon invaders may be ascribed to the absence of strong resistance. The policy of Roman conquest, by disarming the natives, had destroyed their military character, as the policy of British conquest has done in India, where races which once fought hard against the invader under their native princes, such as the people of Mysore, are now wholly unwarlike. Anything like national unity, or power of co-operation against a foreign enemy, had at the same time been extirpated by a government which divided that it might command. The Northman in his turn owed his success partly to the want of unity among the Saxon principalities, partly and principally to the command of the sea which the Saxon usually abandoned to him, and which enabled him to choose his own point of attack, and to baffle the movements of the defenders. When Alfred built a fleet, the case was changed. William of Normandy would scarcely have succeeded, great as his armament was, had it not been for the diversion effected in his favour by the landing of the Scandinavian pretender in the North, and the failure of provisions in Harold's Channel fleet, which compelled the fleet to put into port. Louis of France was called in as a deliverer by the barons who were in arms against the tyranny of John; and it is not necessary to discuss the Tory description of the coming of William of Orange as a conquest of England by the Dutch. Bonaparte threatened invasion, but unhappily was unable

to invade : unhappily we say, because if he had landed in England he would assuredly have there met his doom ; the Russian campaign would have been antedated with a more complete result, and all the after-pages in the history of the Arch-Brigand would have been torn from the book of fate. England is indebted for her political liberties in great measure to the Teutonic character, but she is also in no small measure indebted to this immunity from invasion which has brought with it a comparative immunity from standing armies. In the middle ages the question between absolutism and that baronial liberty which was the germ and precursor of the popular liberty of after-times turned in great measure upon the relative strength of the national militia and of the bands of mercenaries kept in pay by over-reaching kings. The bands of mercenaries brought over by John proved too strong for the patriot barons, and would have annulled the Great Charter, had not national liberty found a timely and powerful, though sinister auxiliary in the ambition of the French Prince. Charles I. had no standing army : the troops taken into pay for the wars with Spain and France had been disbanded before the outbreak of the Revolution ; and on that occasion the nation was able to overthrow the tyranny without looking abroad for assistance. But Charles II. had learned wisdom from his father's fate ; he kept up a small standing army ; and the Whigs, though at the crisis of the Exclusion Bill they laid their hands upon their swords, never ventured to draw them, but allowed themselves to be proscribed, their adherents to be ejected from the corporations, and their leaders to be brought to the scaffold. Resistance was in the same way rendered hopeless by the standing army of James II., and the patriots were compelled to stretch their hands for aid to William of Orange. Even so, it might have gone hard with them if James's soldiers, and above all Churchill, had been true to their paymaster. Navies are not political ; they do not overthrow constitutions ; and in the time of Charles I. it appears that the leading seamen were Protestant, and inclined to the side of the Parliament. Perhaps Protestantism had been rendered fashionable in the navy by the naval wars with Spain.

A third consequence of insular position, especially in early times, is isolation. An extreme case of isolation is presented by Egypt, which is in fact a great island in the desert. The extraordinary fertility of the valley of the Nile produced an early development, which was afterwards arrested by its isolation ; the isolation being probably intensified by the jealous exclusiveness of a powerful priesthood which discouraged maritime pursuits. The isolation of England, though comparatively slight, has still been an important factor in her history. She underwent less than the Continental provinces the influence of Roman conquest. Scotland and Ireland escaped it altogether, for the tide of invasion, having flowed to the foot of the Grampians, soon ebbed to the line between the Solway and Tyne. Britain has no

monuments of Roman power and civilization like those which have been left in Gaul and Spain, and of British Christianity of the Roman period hardly a trace, monumental or historical, remains. By the Saxon conquest England was entirely severed for a time from the European system. The missionary of ecclesiastical Rome recovered what the legionary had lost. Of the main elements of English character political and general, five were brought together when Ethelbert and Augustine met on the coast of Kent. The king represented Teutonism; the missionary represented Judaism, Christianity, imperial and ecclesiastical Rome. We mention Judaism as a separate element, because, among other things, the image of the Hebrew monarchy has certainly entered largely into the political conceptions of Englishmen, perhaps at least as largely as the image of imperial Rome. A sixth element, classical Republicanism, came in with the Reformation, while the political and social influence of science is only just beginning to be felt. Still, after the conversion of England by Augustine, the Church, which was the main organ of civilization, and almost identical with it in the early middle ages, remained national; and to make it thoroughly Roman and Papal, in other words to assimilate it completely to the Church of the Continent, was the object of Hildebrand in promoting the enterprise of William. Roman and Papal the English Church was made, yet not so thoroughly so as completely to destroy its insular and Teutonic character. The Archbishop of Canterbury was still *Papa alterius orbis*; and the struggle for national independence of the Papacy commenced in England long before the struggle for doctrinal reform. The Reformation broke up the confederated Christendom of the middle ages, and England was then thrown back into an isolation very marked, though tempered by her sympathy with the Protestant party on the Continent. In later times the growth of European interests, of commerce, of international law, of international intercourse, of the community of intellect and science, has been gradually building again, on a sounder foundation than that of the Latin Church, the federation of Europe, or rather the federation of mankind. The political sympathy of England with Continental nations, especially with France, has been increasing of late in a very marked manner; the French Revolution of 1830 told at once upon the fortunes of English Reform, and the victory of the Republic over the reactionary attempt of May was profoundly felt by both parties in England. Placed too close to the Continent not to be essentially a part of the European system, England has yet been a peculiar and semi-independent part of it. In European progress she has often acted as a balancing and moderating power. She has been the asylum of vanquished ideas and parties. In the seventeenth century, when absolutism and the Catholic reaction prevailed on the Continent, she was the chief refuge of Protestantism and political liberty. When the French Revolution swept Europe, she threw herself into the anti-revolutionary

scale. The tricolor has gone nearly round the world, at least nearly round Europe; but on the flag of England still remains the religious symbol of the era before the Revolution.

The insular arrogance of the English character is a commonplace joke. It finds, perhaps, its strongest expression in the saying of Milton that the manner of God is to reveal things first to His Englishmen. It has made Englishmen odious even to those who, like the Spaniards, have received liberation or protection from English hands. It stimulated the desperate desire to see France rid of the "Goddams" which inspired Joan of Arc. For an imperial people it is a very unlucky peculiarity, since it precludes not only fusion but sympathy and almost intercourse with the subject races. The kind heart of Lord Elgin, when he was Governor-General of India, was shocked by the absolute want of sympathy or bond of any kind, except love of conquest, between the Anglo-Indian and the native; and the gulf apparently, instead of being filled up, now yawns wider than ever.

It is needless to dwell on anything so commonplace as the effect of an insular position in giving birth to commerce and developing the corresponding elements of political character. The British Islands are singularly well placed for trade with both hemispheres; in them, more than in any other point, may be placed the commercial centre of the world. It may be said that the nation looked out unconsciously from its cradle to an immense heritage beyond the Atlantic. France and Spain looked the same way, and became competitors with England for ascendancy in the New World; but England was more maritime, and the most maritime was sure to prevail. Canada was conquered by the British fleet. To the commerce and the maritime enterprise of former days, which were mainly the results of geographical position, has been added within the last century the vast development of manufactures produced by coal and steam, the parents of manufactures, as well as the expansion of the iron trade in close connection with manufactures. Nothing can be more marked than the effect of industry on political character in the case of England. From being the chief seat of reaction, the North has been converted by manufactures into the chief seat of progress. The Wars of the Roses were not a struggle of political principle; hardly even a dynastic struggle; they had their origin partly in a patriotic antagonism to the foreign queen and to her foreign councils; but they were in the main a vast faction-fight between two sections of an armed and turbulent nobility turned into buccaneers by the French wars, and, like their compeers all over Europe, bereft, by the decay of Catholicism, of the religious restraints with which their morality was bound up. But the Lancastrian party, or rather the party of Margaret of Anjou and her favourites, was the more reactionary, and it had the centre of its strength in the North, whence Margaret drew the plundering and devastating host which gained for her the second battle of St. Albans and paid the



penalty of its ravages in the merciless slaughter of Towton. The North had been kept back in the race of progress by agricultural inferiority, by the absence of commerce with the Continent, and by border wars with Scotland. In the South was the seat of prosperous industry, wealth, and comparative civilization; and the banners of the Southern cities were in the armies of the House of York. The South accepted the Reformation, while the North was the scene of the Pilgrimage of Grace. Coming down to the Civil War in the time of Charles I., we find the Parliament strong in the South and East, where are still the centres of commerce and manufactures, even the iron trade, which has its smelting works in Sussex. In the North the feudal tie between landlord and tenant, and the sentiment of the past, preserve much of their force; and the great power in those parts is the Marquis of Newcastle, at once great territorial lord of the middle ages and elegant *grand seigneur* of the Renaissance, who brings into the field a famous regiment of his own retainers. In certain towns, such as Bradford and Manchester there are germs of manufacturing industry, and these form the sinews of the Parliamentary party in the district which is headed by the Fairfaxes. But in the Reform movement which extended through the first half of the present century, the geographical position of parties was reversed; the swarming cities of the North were then the great centres of Liberalism and the motive power of reform; while the South, having by this time fallen into the hands of great landed proprietors, was Conservative. The stimulating effect of populous centres on opinion is a very familiar fact: even in the rural districts it is noticed by canvassers at elections that men who work in gangs are generally more inclined to the Liberal side than those who work separately.

In England, however, the agricultural element always has been and remains a full counterpoise to the manufacturing and commercial element. Agricultural England is not what Pericles called Attica, a mere suburban garden, the embellishment of a queenly city. It is a substantive interest and a political power. In the time of Charles I. it happened that, owing to the great quantity of land thrown into the market in consequence of the confiscation of the monastic estates, which had slipped through the fingers of the spendthrift courtiers to whom they were at first granted, small freeholders were very numerous in the South, and these men, like the middle class in the towns, being strong Protestants, went with the Parliament against the Laudian reaction in religion. But land in the hands of great proprietors is Conservative, especially when it is held under entails and connected with hereditary nobility; and into the hands of great proprietors the land of England has now entirely passed. The last remnant of the old yeomen freeholders departed in the Cumberland Statesmen, and the yeoman freeholder in England is now about as rare as the other. Commerce has itself assisted the process by giving birth to great fortunes, the owners of



which are led by social ambition to buy landed estates, because to land the odour of feudal superiority still clings, and it is almost the necessary qualification for a title. The land has also actually absorbed a large portion of the wealth produced by manufactures, and by the general development of industry; the estates of Northern landowners especially have enormously increased in value, through the increase of population, not to mention the not inconsiderable appropriation of commercial wealth by marriage. Thus the Conservative element retains its predominance, and it even seems as though the land of Milton, Vane, Cromwell, and the Reformers of 1832, might after all become, politically as well as territorially, the domain of a vast aristocracy of landowners, and the most reactionary instead of the most progressive country in Europe. Before the repeal of the Corn Laws there was a strong antagonism of interest between the landowning aristocracy and the manufacturers of the North: but that antagonism is now at an end; the sympathy of wealth has taken its place; the old aristocracy has veiled its social pride and learned to conciliate the new men, who on their part are more than willing to enter the privileged circle. This junction is at present the great fact of English politics, and was the main cause of the overthrow of the Liberal Government in 1874. The growth of the great cities itself seems likely, as the number of poor householders increases, to furnish Reaction with auxiliaries in the shape of political Lazzaroni capable of being organized by wealth in opposition to the higher order of workmen and the middle class. In Harrington's "*Oceania*," there is much nonsense; but it rises at least to the level of Montesquieu in tracing the intimate connection of political power, even under elective institutions, with wealth in land.

Hitherto, the result of the balance between the landowning and commercial elements has been steadiness of political progress, in contrast on the one hand to the commercial republics of Italy, whose political progress was precocious and rapid but shortlived, and on the other hand to great feudal kingdoms where commerce was comparatively weak. England, as yet, has taken but few steps backwards. It remains to be seen what the future may bring under the changed conditions which we have just described. English commerce, moreover, may have passed its acme. Her insular position gave Great Britain during the Napoleonic wars, with immunity from invasion, a monopoly of manufactures and of the carrying trade. This element of her commercial supremacy is transitory, though others, such as the possession of coal, are not.

Let us now consider the effects of the division between the two islands and of those between different parts of the larger island. The most obvious effect of these is tardy consolidation, which is still indicated by the absence of a collective name for the people of the three kingdoms. The writer was once rebuked by a Scotchman for saying

"England" and "English," instead of saying "Great Britain" and "British." He replied that the rebuke was just, but that we must say "British and Irish." The Scot had overlooked his poor relations.

We always speak of Anglo-Saxons and identify the extension of the Colonial Empire with that of the Anglo-Saxon race. But even if we assume that the Celts of England and of the Scotch Lowlands were exterminated by the Saxons, taking all the elements of Celtic population in the two islands together, they must bear a very considerable proportion to the Teutonic element. That large Irish settlements are being formed in the cities of Northern England is proved by election addresses coquetting with Home Rule. In the competition of the races on the American Continent the Irish more than holds its own. In the age of the steam-engine the Scotch Highlands, the mountains of Cumberland and Westmoreland, of Wales, of Devonshire, and Cornwall, are the asylum of natural beauty, of poetry and hearts which seek repose from the din and turmoil of commercial life. In the primæval age of conquest they, with sea-girt Ireland, were the asylum of the weaker race. There the Celt found refuge when Saxon invasion swept him from the open country of England and from the Scotch Lowlands. There he was preserved with his own language, indicating by its variety of dialects the rapid flux and change of unwritten speech; with his own form of Christianity, that of Apostolic Britain; with his un-Teutonic gifts and weaknesses, his lively, social, sympathetic nature, his religious enthusiasm, essentially the same in its Calvinistic as in its Catholic guise, his superstition, his clannishness, his devotion to chiefs and leaders, his comparative indifference to institutions, and lack of natural aptitude for self-government.

The further we go in these inquiries the more reason there seems to be for believing that the peculiarities of races are not congenital, but impressed by primæval circumstance. Not only the same moral and intellectual nature, but the same primitive institutions, are found in all the races that come under our view; they appear alike in Teuton, Celt, and Semite. That which is not congenital is probably not indelible, so that the less favoured races, placed under happier circumstances, may in time be brought to the level of the more favoured, and nothing warrants inhuman pride of race. But it is surely absurd to deny that peculiarities of race, when formed, are important factors in history. Mr. Buckle, who is most severe upon the extravagances of the race theory, himself runs into extravagances not less manifest in a different direction. He connects the religious character of the Spaniards with the influence of apocryphal volcanoes and earthquakes, whereas it palpably had its origin in the long struggle with the Moors. He in like manner connects the theological tendencies of the Scotch with the thunderstorms which he imagines (wrongly, if we may judge by our own experience) to be very frequent in the Highlands, whereas Scotch theology and the religious habits of the Scotch generally were

formed in the Lowlands and among the Teutons, not among the Celts.

The remnant of the Celtic race in Cornwall and West Devon was small, and was subdued and half incorporated by the Teutons at a comparatively early period; yet it played a distinct and a decidedly Celtic part in the Civil War of the seventeenth century. It played a more important part towards the close of the following century by giving itself almost in a mass to John Wesley. No doubt the neglect of the remote districts by the Bishops of Exeter and their clergy left Wesley a clear field; but the temperament of the people was also in his favour. Anything fervent takes with the Celt, while he cannot abide the religious compromise which commends itself to the practical Saxon.

In the Great Charter there is a provision in favour of the Welsh, who were allied with the Barons in insurrection against the Crown. The Barons were fighting for the Charter, the Welshmen only for their barbarous and predatory independence. But the struggle for Welsh independence helped those who were struggling for the Charter; and the remark may be extended in substance to the general influence of Wales on the political contest between the Crown and the Barons. Even under the House of Lancaster, Llewellyn was faintly reproduced in Owen Glendower. The powerful monarchy of the Tudors finally completed the annexation. But isolation survived independence. The Welshman remained a Celt, preserved his language and his clannish spirit, though local magnates, such as the family of Wynn, filled the place in his heart once occupied by the chief. Ecclesiastically he was annexed, but refused to be incorporated, never seeing the advantage of walking in the middle path which the State Church of England had traced between the extremes of Popery and Dissent. He took Methodism in a Calvinistic and almost wildly enthusiastic form. In this respect his isolation is likely to prove far more important than anything which Welsh patriotism strives to resuscitate by Eisteddfodds. In the struggle, apparently imminent, between the system of Church Establishments and religious equality, Wales furnishes a most favourable battle-ground to the party of Disestablishment.

The Teutonic realm of England was powerful enough to subdue, if not to assimilate, the remnants of the Celtic race in Wales and their other western hills of refuge. But the Teutonic realm of Scotland was not large or powerful enough to subdue the Celts of the Highlands, whose fastnesses constituted in geographical area the greater portion of the country. It seems that in the case of the Highlands, as in that of Ireland, Teutonic adventurers found their way into the domain of the Celts and became chieftains, but in becoming chieftains they became Celts. Down to the Hanoverian times the chain of the Grampians which from the Castle of Stirling is seen rising like a

wall over the rich plain, divided from each other two nationalities, differing totally in ideas, institutions, habits, and costume, as well as in speech, and the less civilized of which still regarded the more civilized as alien intruders, while the more civilized regarded the less civilized as robbers. Internally, the topographical character of the Highlands was favourable to the continuance of the clan system, because each clan having its own separate glen, fusion was precluded, and the progress towards union went no further than the domination of the more powerful clans over the less powerful. Mountains also preserve the general equality and brotherhood which are not less essential to the constitution of the clan than devotion to the chief, by preventing the use of that great minister of aristocracy, the horse. At Killiecrankie and Prestonpans the leaders of the clan and the humblest clansmen still charged on foot side by side. Macaulay is undoubtedly right in saying that the Highland risings against William III. and the first two Georges were not dynastic but clan movements. They were in fact the last raids of the Gael upon the country which had been wrested from him by the Sassenach. Little cared the clansman for the principles of Filmer or Locke, for the claims of the House of Stuart or for those of the House of Brunswick. Antipathy to the Clan Campbell was the nearest approach to a political motive. Chiefs alone, such as the unspeakable Lovat, had entered as political *condottieri* into the dynastic intrigues of the period, and brought the claymores of their clansmen to the standard of their patron, as Indian chiefs in the American wars brought the tomahawks of their tribes to the standard of France or England. Celtic independence greatly contributed to the general perpetuation of anarchy in Scotland, to the backwardness of Scotch civilization, and to the abortive weakness of the Parliamentary institutions. Union with the more powerful kingdom at last supplied the force requisite for the taming of the Celt. Highlanders, at the bidding of Chatham's genius, became the soldiers, and are now the pet soldiers, of the British monarchy. A Hanoverian tailor with improving hand shaped the Highland plaid, which had originally resembled the simple drapery of the Irish kern, into a garb of complex beauty and well suited for fancy balls. The power of the chiefs and the substance of the clan system were finally swept away, though the sentiment lingers, even in the Transatlantic abodes of the clansmen, and is prized, like the dress, as a remnant of social picturesqueness in a prosaic and levelling age. The hills and lakes—at the thought of which even Gibbon shuddered—are the favourite retreats of the luxury which seeks in wildness refreshment from civilization. After Culloden, Presbyterianism effectually made its way into the Highlands, of which a great part had up to that time been little better than heathen; but it did not fail to take a strong tinge of Celtic enthusiasm and superstition.

Of all the lines of division in Great Britain, however, the most

important politically has been that which is least clearly traced by the hand of nature. The natural barriers between England and Scotland were not sufficient to prevent the extension of the Saxon settlements and kingdoms across the border. In the name of the Scotch capital we have a monument of a union before that of 1603. That the Norman Conquest did not include the Saxons of the Scotch Lowlands was due chiefly to the menacing attitude of Danish pretenders, and the other military dangers which led the Conqueror to guard himself on the north by a broad belt of desolation. Edward I., in attempting to extend his feudal supremacy over Scotland, may well have seemed to himself to have been acting in the interest of both nations. Union would have put an end to border war, and it would have delivered the Scotch in the Lowlands from the extremity of feudal oppression, and the rest of the country from a savage anarchy, giving them in place of those curses by far the best government of the time. The resistance came partly from mere barbarism, partly from Norman adventurers, who were no more Scotch than English, whose aims were purely selfish, and who would gladly have accepted Scotland as a vassal kingdom from Edward's hand. But the annexation would no doubt have formidably increased the power of the Crown, not only by extending its dominions, but by removing that which was a support often of aristocratic anarchy in England, but sometimes of rudimentary freedom. Had the whole island fallen under one victorious sceptre, the next wielder of that sceptre, under the name of the great Edward's wittold son, would have been Piers Gaveston. But what no prescience on the part of any one in the time of Edward I. could possibly have foreseen was the inestimable benefit which disunion and even anarchy indirectly conferred on the whole island in the shape of a separate Scotch Reformation. Divines, when they have exhausted their reasonings about the rival forms of Church government, will probably find that the argument which had practically most effect in determining the question was that of the much decried but in his way sagacious James I., "No bishop, no king!" In England the Reformation was semi-Catholic; in Sweden it was Lutheran; but in both countries it was made by the kings, and in both Episcopacy was retained. Where the Reformation was the work of the people, more popular forms of Church government prevailed. In Scotland the monarchy, always weak, was at the time of the Reformation practically in abeyance, and the master of the movement was emphatically a man of the people. As to the nobles, they seem to have thought only of appropriating the Church lands, and to have been willing to leave to the nation the spiritual gratification of settling its own religion. Probably they also felt with regard to the disinherited proprietors of the Church lands that "stone dead had no fellow." The result was a democratic and thoroughly Protestant Church, which drew into itself the highest

energies, political as well as religious, of a strong and great-hearted people, and by which Laud and his confederates, when they had apparently overcome resistance in England, were, as Milton says, "more robustiously handled." If the Scotch auxiliaries did not win the decisive battle of Marston Moor, they enabled the English Parliamentarians to fight and win it. During the dark days of the Restoration English resistance to tyranny was strongly supported on the ecclesiastical side by the martyr steadfastness of the Scotch, till the joint effort triumphed in the Revolution. It is singular and sad to find Scotland afterwards becoming one vast rotten borough, managed in the time of Pitt by Dundas, who paid the boroughmongers by appointments in India, with calamitous consequences to the poor Hindoo. But the intensity of the local evil, perhaps, lent force to the revulsion, and Scotland has ever since been a distinctly Liberal element in British politics, and seems now likely to lead the way to a complete measure of religious freedom.

Nature, to a great extent, fore-ordained the high destiny of the larger island; to at least an equal extent she fore-ordained the sad destiny of the smaller island. Irish history, studied impartially, is a grand lesson in political charity; so clear is it that in these deplorable annals the more important part was played by adverse circumstance, the less important by the malignity of man. That the stronger nation is entitled by the law of force to conquer its weaker neighbour and to govern the conquered in its own interest is a doctrine which civilized morality abhors. But in the days before civilized morality, in the days when the only law was that of natural selection, to which philosophy by a strange counter-revolution seems now inclined to return, the smaller island was almost sure to be conquered by the possessors of the larger, more especially as the smaller, cut off from the Continent by the larger, lay completely within its grasp. The map, in short, tells us plainly that the destiny of Ireland was subordinated to that of Great Britain. At the same time, the smaller island being of considerable size and the channel of considerable breadth, it was likely that the resistance would be tough and the conquest slow. The unsettled state of Ireland, and the half-nomad condition in which at a comparatively late period its tribes remained, would also help to protract the bitter process of subjugation; and these again were the inevitable results of the rainy climate, which, while it clothed the island with green and made pasture abundant, forbade the cultivation of grain. Ireland and Wales alike appear to have been the scenes of a precocious civilization, merely intellectual and literary in its character, and closely connected with the Church, though including also a bardic element derived from the times before Christianity, the fruits of which were poetry, fantastic law-making, and probably the germs of scholastic theology, combined, in the case of Ireland, with missionary enterprise and such ecclesiastical architecture as the Round Towers. But cities



there were none, and it is evident that the native Church with difficulty sustained her higher life amidst the influences and encroachments of surrounding barbarism. The Anglo-Norman conquest of Ireland was a supplement to the Norman conquest of England; and, like the Norman conquest of England, it was a religious as well as a political enterprise. As Hildebrand had commissioned William to bring the national Church of England into complete submission to the See of Rome, so Adrian, by the Bull which is the stumblingblock of Irish Catholics, granted Ireland to Henry upon condition of his reforming, that is, Romanizing, its primitive and schismatic Church. Ecclesiastical intrigue had already been working in the same direction, and had in some measure prepared the way for the conqueror by disposing the heads of the Irish clergy to receive him as the emancipator of the Church from the secular oppression and imposts of the chiefs. But in the case of England, a settled and agricultural country, the conquest was complete and final; the conquerors became everywhere a new upper class which, though at first alien and oppressive, became in time a national nobility, and ultimately blended with the subject race. In the case of Ireland, though the septs were easily defeated by the Norman soldiery, and the formal submission of their chiefs was easily extorted, the conquest was neither complete nor final. In their hills and bogs the wandering septs easily evaded the Norman arms. The Irish Channel was wide. The road lay through North Wales, long unsubdued, and, even when subdued, mutinous, and presenting natural obstacles to the passage of heavy troops. The centre of Anglo-Norman power lay far away in the south-east of England, and the force of the monarchy was either attracted to Continental fields or absorbed by struggles with baronial factions. Richard II., coming to a throne which had been strengthened and exalted by the achievements of his grandfather, seems in one of his moods of fitful ambition to have conceived the design of completing the conquest of Ireland, and he passed over with a great power; but his fate showed that the arm of the monarchy was still too short to reach the dependency without losing hold upon the imperial country. As a rule, the subjugation of Ireland during the period before the Tudors was in effect left to private enterprise, which of course confined its efforts to objects of private gain, and never thought of undertaking the systematic subjugation of native fortresses in the interest of order and civilization. Instead of a national aristocracy the result was a military colony or Pale, between the inhabitants of which and the natives raged a perpetual border war, as savage as that between the settlers at the Cape and the Kaffirs, or that between the American frontier-man and the Red Indian. The religious quarrel was and has always been secondary in importance to the struggle of the races for the land. In the period following the conquest it was the Pale that was distinctively Romanist. But when at the Reformation the Pale became Protestant,

the natives, from antagonism of race, became more intensely Catholic, and were drawn into the league of Catholic powers on the Continent, in which they suffered the usual fate of the dwarf who goes to battle with the giant. By the strong monarchy of the Tudors the conquest of Ireland was completed with circumstances of cruelty sufficient to plant undying hatred in the breast of the people. But the struggle for the land did not end there; instead of the form of conquest it took that of confiscation, and was waged by the intruder with the arms of legal chicane. In the form of eviction it has lasted to the present hour; and eviction in Ireland is not like eviction in England, where great manufacturing cities receive and employ the evicted; it is starvation or exile. Into exile the Irish people have gone by millions, and thus, though neither maritime nor by nature colonists, they have had a great share in the peopling of the New World. The cities and railroads of the United States are to a great extent the monuments of their labour. In the political sphere they have retained the weakness produced by ages of political serfage, and are still the *débris* of broken clans, with little about them of the genuine republican, apt blindly to follow the leader who stands to them as a chief, while they are instinctively hostile to law and government as their immemorial oppressors in their native land. British statesmen, when they had conceded Catholic emancipation and afterwards disestablishment, may have fancied that they had removed the root of the evil. But the real root was not touched till Parliament took up the question of the land, and effected a compromise which may perhaps have to be again revised before complete pacification is attained.

In another way geography has exercised a sinister influence on the fortunes of Ireland. Closely approaching Scotland, the northern coast of Ireland in course of time invited Scotch immigration, which formed as it were a Presbyterian Pale. If the antagonism between the English Episcopalian and the Irish Catholic was strong, that between the Scotch Presbyterian and the Irish Catholic was stronger. To the English Episcopalian the Irish Catholic was a barbarian and a Romanist; to the Scotch Presbyterian he was a Canaanite and an idolater. Nothing in history is more hideous than the conflict in the North of Ireland in the time of Charles I. This is the feud which has been tenacious enough of its evil life to propagate itself even in the New World, and to renew in the streets of Canadian cities the brutal and scandalous conflicts which disgrace Belfast. On the other hand, through the Scotch colony, the larger island has a second hold upon the smaller. Of all political projects a federal union of England and Ireland with separate Parliaments under the same Crown seems the most hopeless, at least if government is to remain parliamentary; it may be safely said that the normal relation between the two Parliaments would be collision, and collision on a question of peace or war would be disruption. But an independent Ireland would be a feasible

as well as natural object of Irish aspiration if it were not for the strength, moral as well as numerical, of the two intrusive elements. How could the Catholic majority be restrained from legislation which the Protestant minority would deem oppressive? And how could the Protestant minority, being as it is more English or Scotch than Irish, be restrained from stretching its hands to England or Scotland for aid? It is true that if scepticism continues to advance at its present rate, the lines of religious separation may be obliterated or become too faint to exercise a great practical influence, and the bond of the soil may then prevail. But the feeling against England which is the strength of Irish Nationalism is likely to subside at the same time.

Speculation on unfulfilled contingencies is not invariably barren. It is interesting at all events to consider what would have been the consequences to the people of the two islands, and to humanity generally, if a Saxon England and a Celtic Ireland had been allowed to grow up and develop by the side of each other untouched by Norman conquest. In the case of Ireland we should have been spared centuries of oppression which has profoundly reacted, as oppression always does, on the character of the oppressor; and it is difficult to believe that the Isle of Saints and of primitive Universities would not have produced some good fruits of its own. In the Norman conquest of England historical optimism sees a great political and intellectual blessing beneath the disguise of barbarous havoc and alien tyranny. The Conquest was a continuation of the process of migratory invasions by which the nations of modern Europe were founded, from restless ambition and cupidity, when it had ceased to be beneficent. It was not the superposition of one primitive element of population on another, to the ultimate advantage, possibly, of the compound; but the destruction of a nationality, the nationality of Alfred and Harold, of Bede and Ælfric. The French were superior in military organization; that they had superior gifts of any kind, or that their promise was higher than that of the native English, it would not be easy to prove. The language, we are told, was enriched by the intrusion of the French element. If it was enriched it was shattered; and the result is a mixture so heterogeneous as to be hardly available for the purposes of exact thought, while the language of science is borrowed from the Greek, and as regards the unlearned mass of the people is hardly a medium of thought at all. There are great calamities in history, though their effects may in time be worked off, and they may be attended by some incidental good. Perhaps the greatest calamity in history were the wars of Napoleon, in which some incidental good may nevertheless be found.

To the influences of geographical position, soil, and race is to be added, to complete the account of the physical heritage, the influence of climate. But in the case of the British Islands we must speak not of climate, but of climates; for within the compass of one small realm are climates moist and comparatively dry, warm and cold, bracing

and enervating, the results of special influences the range of which is limited. Civilized man to a great extent makes a climate for himself; his life in the North is spent mainly indoors, where artificial heat replaces the sun. The idea which still haunts us, that formidable vigour and aptitude for conquest are the appanage of Northern races, is a survival from the state in which the rigour of nature selected and hardened the destined conquerors of the Roman Empire. The stoves of St. Petersburg are as enervating as the sun of Naples, and in the struggle between the Northern and Southern States of America not the least vigorous soldiers were those who came from Louisiana. In the barbarous state the action of a Northern climate as a force of natural selection must be tremendous. The most important of the races which peopled the British Islands had already undergone that action in their original abodes. They could, however, still feel the beneficent influence of a climate on the whole eminently favourable to health and to activity; bracing, yet not so rigorous as to kill those tender plants of humanity which often bear in them the most precious germs of civilization; neither confining the inhabitant too much to the shelter of his dwelling, nor, as the suns of the South are apt to do, drawing him too much from home. The climate and the soil together formed a good school for the character of the young nation, as they exacted the toil of the husbandman and rewarded it. Of the varieties of temperature and weather within the islands the national character still bears the impress, though in a degree always decreasing as the assimilating agencies of civilization make their way. Irrespectively of the influence of special employments, and perhaps even of peculiarity of race, mental vigour, independence, and reasoning power are always ascribed to the people of the North. Variety, in this as in other respects, would naturally produce a balance of tendencies in the nation conducive to moderation and evenness of progress.

The islands are now the centre of an Empire which to some minds seems more important than the islands themselves. An Empire it is called, but the name is really applicable only to India. The relation of England to her free colonies is not in the proper sense of the term imperial; while her relation to such dependencies as Gibraltar and Malta is military alone. Colonization is the natural and entirely beneficent result of general causes, obvious enough and already mentioned, including the power of self-government, fostered by the circumstances of the colonizing country, which made the character and destiny of New England so different from those of New France. Equally natural was the choice of the situation for the original colonies on the shore of the New World. The foundation of the Australian Colonies, on the other hand, was determined by political accident, compensation for the loss of the American Colonies being sought on the other side of the globe. It will perhaps be thought

hereafter that the quarrel with New England was calamitous in its consequences as well as in itself, since it led to the diversion of British emigration from America, where it supplied the necessary element of guidance and control to a democracy of mixed but not uncongenial races, to Australia, where, as there must be a limit to its own multiplication, it may hereafter have to struggle for mastery with swarming multitudes of Chinese, almost as incapable of incorporation with it as the negro. India and the other conquered dependencies are the fruits of strength as a war power at sea combined with weakness on land. Though not so generally noticed, the second of these two factors has not been less operative than the first. Chatham attacked France in her distant dependencies when he had failed to make any impression on her own coasts. Still more clearly was Chatham's son, the most incapable of war ministers, driven to the capture of sugar islands by his inability to take part, otherwise than by subsidies, in the decisive struggle on the Continental fields. This may deserve the attention of those who do not think it criminal to examine the policy of Empire. Outlying pawns picked up by a feeble chessplayer merely because he could not mate the king do not at first sight necessarily commend themselves as invaluable possessions. Carthage and Venice were merely great commercial cities, which, when they entered on a career of conquest, were compelled at once to form armies of mercenaries, and to incur all the evil consequences by which the employment of those vile and fatal instruments of ambition is attended. England being, not a commercial city, but a nation, and a nation endowed with the highest military qualities, has escaped the fell necessity except in the case of India; and India, under the reign of the Company, and even for some time after its legal annexation to the Crown, was regarded and treated almost as a realm in another planet, with an army, a political system, and a morality of its own. But now it appears that the wrongs of the Hindoo are going to be avenged, as the wrongs of the conquered have often been, by their moral effect upon the conqueror. A body of barbarian mercenaries has appeared upon the European scene as an integral part of the British army, while the reflex influence of Indian Empire upon the political character and tendencies of the imperial nation is too manifest to be any longer overlooked. England now stands where the paths divide, the one leading by industrial and commercial progress to increase of political liberty; the other, by a career of conquest, to the political results in which such a career has never yet failed to end. At present the influences in favour of taking the path of conquest seem to preponderate, and the probability seems to be that the leadership of political progress, which has hitherto belonged to England and has constituted the special interest of her history, will, in the near future, pass into other hands.

GOLDWIN SMITH.

in its  
ritish  
nt of  
renial  
multi-  
ming  
it as  
fruits  
land.  
rs has  
ce in  
ession  
most  
ds by  
ciseive  
ion of  
npire.  
use he  
mend  
were  
career  
s, and  
those  
g, not  
h the  
in the  
even  
arded  
a poli-  
at the  
of the  
ueror.  
opean  
luence  
of the  
agland  
al and  
r, by a  
er has  
taking  
seems  
itherto  
of her

WITH.